



Meeting with the City of Superior
Friday, September 17, 2004, 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

People in attendance

Jason Serck, City of Superior
Ron Chika, Duluth/Superior MPO
Kirk Scoog, Duluth/Superior MPO
James Giltemerries, Duluth/Superior MPO
Jim Heilig, Duluth Transit

Doug Dalton, WisDOT
Casey Newman, WisDOT
John Swissler, WisDOT
Martin Forbes, WisDOT
Lance Berger, WisDOT

- 1) Overview of WisDOT's meeting purpose and WisDOT's long-range plan, *Connections 2030*, by WisDOT staff: The meeting began at 10:00 with introductions. Casey Newman, WisDOT, gave an overview of WisDOT's long-range plan *Connections 2030*. WisDOT is seeking input on transportation planning issues from larger Wisconsin cities at this point. *Connections 2030* is scheduled to be completed in 2006.
- 2) Gathering of input from City of Superior: Staff from the City of Superior, the Duluth/Superior MPO (MIC) and Duluth Transit discussed the following:

Growth

City staff marked up a map to reflect growth areas and discussed the following activities:

- Big box retail in I-35 corridor – existing frontage roads should handle the increased capacity (*Jason – could you clarify for us? I thought this was in Superior but Doug thought this was in Duluth*)
- Some new housing development on the northwest side of town (40-50 lots)
- The desire to create a new industrial park near the Bong bridge – access to the bridge (Hwy 2) is a concern
- A downtown streetscape and redevelopment process has started to make Tower Avenue (the main thoroughfare) more pedestrian friendly and attractive to outside visitors

There is an effort to enhance the lakefront area of the city and make this a more appealing tourist/recreation destination for the city. The city marina is full (over 400 boat slips) and attracts users from all over the Midwest. Public doctrine laws prevent commercial development in filled portions of Lake Superior (all use has to be public or maritime related).

City staff also noted that there large area of wetlands within the city limits. The Wisconsin DNR has not allowed any of the wetlands to be filled for development purposes (The city feels that Wisconsin DNR has a more strict approach to this issue than the Minnesota DNR).

A recently completed study recommended the creation of a rail/truck intermodal facility in the Duluth/Superior region. Several sites under consideration are in Superior. Some transportation improvements may be necessary (depending on the site selected). The freight rail providers in the area are in the process of prioritizing and selecting a site.

The port system in Superior is almost all privately owned (unique to Wisconsin ports). The city feels that the owners have done a good job of maintaining the port infrastructure, but it is aging. The recent discovery of unexplained early corrosion on some of the port facilities has raised some concerns about the long-term viability of the port infrastructure. The city, county, MPO and WisDOT are working cooperatively to secure funds to fine out what is causing the corrosion issue so a solution can be identified. The city has also began to work with the port owners to prioritize projects and assist in the application for Harbor Assistance grants.

Local Traffic Circulation Issues

“Superior is a trucking town” – Local access from the ports to the highway system require a trip through the city, either on the major arterials or through neighborhoods. Truck routes are designated, but not always followed. Some type of program that focused resources on keeping these facilities better maintained would be appreciated by the city.

There are also crossing issues and the city is working with the RR’s (4 class 1’s operate in Superior) to work on solutions – options are limited due to the sheer number of crossings and the location of the port facilities

Transit

Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) provides contract transit service to Superior. DTA indicated that current Wisconsin statues do not create any barriers to providing cross state service. Most trips (2/3) are from Superior to Duluth in the morning and vice versa at night. VA hospital in Superior does bring a large number of E&D-related trips into Superior. The increase in E&D trips and the costs associated with those trips are a long-term concern for DTA.

DTA is looking at alternatives to fixed route service to address the growing transit needs of the area that cannot be met with traditional service due to dispersed development patterns in both Duluth and Superior. DTA is also trying to draw greater involvement from UW-Superior in a subsidized pass program.

The area has not been served by intercity bus for over a decade – some type of intercity service would be helpful for the area, but most of their trips are drawn to the Twin Cities area, not Madison and SE Wisconsin.

Other Rail Issues

There is some interest in passenger rail, but the more attractive connection would be through Duluth to the Twin Cities.

The city has good working relationships with the Class 1 railroads and will continue to work with them to site the intermodal facility addressed above.

Pedestrian-related Activities

The city is heavily involved in the Safe Routes to School program. As part of that process MIC is developing a school route inventory for the Superior School District (one for Duluth will also be done). The inventory will identify implementation strategies to make walking or riding bikes to school more attractive.

The results of the inventory will be used as part of a campaign tying the health benefits associated with walking and biking and the safe routes program. The City and MIC are beginning to look for funding to implement the inventory strategies.

City staff also noted that a formal committee consisting of city, MIC and school district staff has been established to jointly address transportation issues.